



CHAPTER II

WE OPENED the fifty-first season of the Club in October, 1924, under the presidency of George Ellis Dawson, then a man well along in years. He had been a member of the Club for thirty-four years, a modest, retiring man, faithful in attendance, of few words, genial, unaffected, amiable. The meeting was held in Recital Hall where Mrs. Green served one of her excellent dinners to seventy-two members and guests, after which Mr. Dawson delivered his Inaugural, *The X Club*. At this time the Club had one hundred and eighty-two resident members, sixty-five non-resident, one honorary, and three Associate members. Concerning Associate members a word is in order at this point. Three or four years before this fifty-first season, Merritt Starr, one of our foremost members and always actively interested in promoting Club welfare, in whose fertile brain the idea was conceived, if we remember rightly, put forward the suggestion that the Club's prestige would be enhanced if we could lure into our fold certain well-known educators, such as college presidents and professors in institutions at a distance from Chicago. Of course these men could not be classed as resident members or even non-resident since they had never been residents of Chicago. Mr. Starr proposed to call them *Associate Members*. The suggestion met with Club approval. Accordingly the By-Laws were revised and this new class of members was formally recognized. Like non-resident members, Associate members have no vote and pay no dues. Their connection with the Club would seem to be somewhat tenuous, but it has lasted. Mr. Starr and his friends selected four names as a nucleus: Dr. Melvin A. Brannon, President of Beloit College, Dr. James L. McConaughy, President of Knox College, Professor

Kenneth McKenzie, Professor of Italian Literature at the University of Illinois, and Professor William E. Simonds, Professor of English at Knox College. These men were duly elected to associate membership. There have been no additions since. Mr. McConaughy resigned shortly after his election, and went to an Eastern College leaving his three associates to do the honors and bear the burden of their class. This they have done without a break for the past twenty years. While on this subject we should mention the Club activities in which these associate members took part. It is a short record. Mr. Starr, who took a great interest in Italian literature, and was a devotee of Dante, obtained the professional services of Professor McKenzie and Professor Ernest H. Wilkins (of the University of Chicago at that time, and for many years President of Oberlin College) as collaborators in the preparation of a paper entitled *Dante Six Hundred Years After*, which he read before the Club with considerable effect in 1921. The Club published this paper, which is number XXVIII in our list of publications. That was Mr. McKenzie's only contribution, an indirect one, to our Club proceedings. Dr. Brannon made one appearance before the Club, on March 8, 1937, when he read a paper on *Time Thinking*. At that time he had accumulated something of a record as an educational executive, having been, since his presidency of Beloit, Chancellor of the University of Montana, and President of the University of Idaho. At the time when he read his one paper he was a research worker in zoology at the University of Wisconsin. He now resides in Florida in partial, if not full, retirement. Professor Simonds retired to Ithaca, New York, some years ago; his continuous interest in our Club is evinced by an annual note of appreciation to the Secretary.

Now to return to our fifty-first season. To an invitation extended to us from the Literary Club of Cincinnati to attend the celebration of its seventy-fifth anniversary to be held during October, 1924, a prompt acceptance was re-

turned, and on October 13th Edwin H. Lewis was selected to be our representative. He reported duly that he had been pleasantly entertained in the Ohio city by a colorful group of amateur and semi-professional literati, men like ourselves, of education, eager to learn more of literature and science and to practise the art of writing.

During the twenty years covered by this epitomized history of our Club proceedings, between five and six hundred papers have been read before the Club, papers of high and low degree, as would be expected in a general literary forum such as ours. At the end of this volume will be found the names, alphabetically arranged, of the authors of these papers, and the titles of the papers each author has read. We might add that there is also an appendix containing the names of all members who were alive at the beginning of the season 1924-1925, or have become members since, together with the dates of their "accession," and "dismemberment," if any, whether by death, resignation, or other cause.

We have selected for special mention and comment, in our perusal of the record with an unprejudiced mind, only those papers of intrinsic worth that awaken our dormant memory, papers historical, philosophical, scientific, highly imaginative, authoritative, humorous and entertaining, all the while remembering that "One star differeth from another in glory." Among the outstanding papers read during this 1924-1925 season were Frank J. Loesch's "*Personal Recollections of the Republican Convention of 1880*;" *The Most Commonplace Thing in the World*, by Wilfred Puttkammer (a paper he read again twenty-one years later before a mostly new generation of members); *Scots*, by William McAndrew; Irving Pond's Ladies' Night address, *Education for Art and Life*; *Shakespeare and the Renaissance*, by Merritt Starr (his final contribution); the first of a series of three exceptionally fine papers by Governor Horner entitled *Restless Ashes*; and *Values*, by Edward Scribner Ames, read at the final meeting of the year, May 18, 1925. These were the literary high-lights of the season.

WE MOVE

There had been intimations of an impending change of quarters in the autumn of 1924. The Chairman of the Committee on Rooms and Finance, Holmes Onderdonk, the Chicago Tribune's real estate manager, on October 29, "reported progress of negotiations for another Club room, and by vote of the members present was empowered to act." The change was effected in the following February when the Club transferred its Lares and Penates and other suppellectile possessions from the tenth floor of the Fine Arts Building (Recital Hall, later called Curtiss Hall in honor of Charles C. Curtiss, one of our members and the Manager of the Building) to the eighth floor of the same building, suite 806-807, fronting Michigan Avenue. On February 7th, 1925, the Club met in the new rooms for the first time. The honor of reading the first paper on that memorable occasion fell to Samuel John Duncan-Clark of the Chicago Daily News, a journalist of repute, whose reports and comments during World War I had gained for him a large following. Duncan-Clark was also an amateur painter and star-gazer. The topic of his paper was, *Adventures in Ruralia*. We still had the privilege of using Recital Hall for Ladies' Nights and other special meetings. For four years we met in this eighth floor suite, where many interesting sessions were held before our next move, a most infelicitous one, concerning which certain remarks will be made at the proper time. Eleven new members were received into the Club during 1924-1925. Seven resident members were removed by death in this period. Mr. Charles L. Hutchinson has been memorialized with deep feeling by Mr. Gookin in his history. Thomas Dent, our lone honorary member, a retired lawyer, highly respected at the bar by his compeers for his suavity, gentle wit, and quiet, unostentatious manner both in and outside of court, died on Christmas Day, 1924. In his last years, bereft of family, he lived alone in a comfortable Home for Aged Men. Frail of

body he was rarely able to come to our meetings, but to the last his loyalty and affection were evidenced by a small annual contribution from his slender means to the Club treasury. This little *auto-da-fé* (in the literal meaning of that expression) is here recorded as a tardy tribute to his memory. For the other five members who died during this season: James Clarke Jeffrey, Dr. Norman Bridge, James J. Wait, Edward P. Bailey, and Edgar A. Bancroft, all distinguished members, memorials were written by special committees and read before the Club. The memorial for the last named was printed in the yearbook for the following year. Mr. Bancroft died in Japan July 28, 1925. In chapter Ten of Mr. Gookin's History, that recorder, anticipating the end of his story, interpolated a touching eulogy of Edgar Bancroft. Our yearbook memorial said in part:

"Mr. Bancroft was a leader in his profession, an orator of superlative ability, a patriot of untiring effort, a public servant of unflagging zeal, a watchful private citizen, a protagonist for the down-trodden, a wise counselor in the never-ending problems of racial conflict growing out of prejudice. . . . He would always rally to the cry of citizenship. All these activities were but experimental material for his fearless and intelligent conduct of the difficult office of United States Ambassador to Japan, where his skill and conciliatory genius were leading surely to a restoration of harmony and a better understanding on the part of Japan when Death unkindly came. He was a member of our happy little band of literary aspirants, and lent his wit and charm to many of our meetings for several years."